

# Astro News

## Transformer catches fire in Building 105

**John Ryan**  
Public Affairs Office

A recently installed transformer caught fire in the basement of Building 105 during the early morning hours Monday.

The fire caused base officials to turn off power to Building 105 Monday and forced occupants to work from alternative offices including their homes.

"The quick action taken by command post personnel helped prevent further damage to the building," said Dave Grossman, Los Angeles Air Force Base director of operations. "Our exercise training proved valuable during this real-life situation. Airman 1st Class Kristen Johnson, the duty controller, reacted instinctively to the abnormal power loss. She immediately notified the law enforcement desk and requested civil engineering help."

"The responsiveness of the El Segundo Fire Department, after receiving a call from security forces, ensured the fire was quickly extinguished," said Col. Dieter Barnes, 61st Air Base Group commander. "They did a great job."

Electricians were able to restore power Monday afternoon. However, the more difficult task of eliminating the smell of smoke took the rest of the day.

"Safety, environmental and civil engineering did a superb job ensuring the building was safe to inhabit," said Barnes. "In addition, security forces did a great job ensuring the security of the base was never compromised by posting guards at several buildings while the power was out. They also established a perimeter and directed Building 105 personnel to the central gathering location at The Club."

A thorough investigation to determine the direct cause of the fire is underway.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Jeff Capenos

**Staff Sgt. Mike Ford, Space and Missile Systems Center Command Post specialist, cleans the two-way mirror to the base command post following Monday's transformer fire in Building 105. Power to Building 105 was off most of the day during cleanup efforts and repairs to the building's electrical system. The cause of the fire is under investigation.**

## *Anthrax vaccine called effective, safe, necessary*

**Douglas J. Gillert**  
American Forces Press Service

Despite a few well-publicized attacks against the Department of Defense's mandatory anthrax vaccination program, a senior defense health official said the vaccines are safe, effective and necessary.

"We're pleased with the progress of the vaccination program. We're following it very closely to make sure we do it right," said Rear Adm. Michael Cowan, medical readiness director on the Joint Staff.

Cowan said the anthrax program received the full backing and approval of the federal Food and Drug Administra-

tion, and that both DOD and the FDA test and approve all batches of the vaccine at the Michigan manufacturing facility. He said adverse reactions by people receiving the vaccine have been extremely low.

"The side effect percentage is something like .0002 percent, which makes it many times safer, for example, than the diphtheria shots we give our children," Cowan said.

There's been just one reported reac-

tion by a service member who experienced Guillain-Barre Syndrome, a type of temporary paralysis associated with other vaccines, surgery and insect stings. The affected service member fully recovered, Cowan said, and the Pentagon is on the lookout for any additional cases of side effects.

Critics of the vaccine program question the safety and quality of the manufacturer, Bioport Corp. of Lansing, Mich., citing a February FDA inspec-

tion that found deviations from FDA standards in record-keeping and testing procedures. The report suggested that some service members have received inoculations from a 1993 batch that didn't get a required FDA revalidation before it was put to use.

"That batch was properly revalidated," Cowan said. "There has never been a batch that's gone out that has not been current and fully FDA-approved." The FDA and DOD work closely with Bioport anytime inspections find fault with production or record-keeping pro-

Information about the mandatory Anthrax vaccine is located at a new internet site, "Countering the Anthrax Threat." Point your web browser to [www.defenselink.mil/specials/Anthrax](http://www.defenselink.mil/specials/Anthrax)

To submit questions or comments about the information contained at the Anthrax web site, forward them to DOD online at [www.defenselink.mil/faq/comment.html](http://www.defenselink.mil/faq/comment.html)

**Anthrax continued on  
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# Medical squadron commander pledges commitment

Since taking command Aug. 28, I am extremely impressed with what I know of the men and women of the 61st Medical Squadron. They provide outstanding patient care and are dedicated to customer satisfaction and the success of the 61st Air Base Group. As a health care organization, we must ensure we deliver the right care, at the right time ... all the time. Our challenge as a military organization is clear: to continue on the road to success laid out by our distinguished Air Force leadership; to live up to our core values; to carry out the duties and responsibilities of leadership ... as everyone of us is a leader; and to fulfill our obligation to the American people.

I would like you to know three things about me and have a better understanding of what you can expect from me and the clinic in the future:

First, I believe military service is not just another job. It is a noble calling, an uncommon profession that calls for people of uncommon dedication. I also believe Air Force

## Commander's Forum

### Col. (s) Mark P. Wisniewski

#### 61st Medical Squadron Commander



members share common responsibilities and are awarded trust and confidence, to fulfill the mission, to care for the people and to commit to our core values. I pledge my commitment, and that of the 61st Medical Squadron, to demonstrate that uncommon dedication and to live up to our responsibilities.

Second, I pledge my commitment to the Air Force core values: Integrity First, Service Before Self and Excellence In All We Do.

Integrity, service and excellence are three simple words that epitomize the core of the military profession. The bedrock of integrity, fortified by service to country, which in turn fuels the drive for excellence. Integrity is doing the right thing when nobody is looking; service is subordinating individual needs to the needs of the nation; and the drive for excellence is a moral obligation, because we have been entrusted with our nation's security. I believe a commitment to

these values will serve as the beacon toward the right path. They set the standard for our behavior, our service to our country and our treatment of one another.

And lastly, I will leave you with my feelings on one's character, as expressed by Sheila Widnall, our past Secretary of the Air Force.

- Watch your thoughts; they become words
- Watch you words; they become actions
- Watch your actions; they become habits
- Watch your habits; they become character
- Watch your character; it becomes your destiny

The character of individuals form the character of the organization. The character of its leaders shapes the destiny of the organization. I know the men and women of the 61st Medical Squadron have the character to do the right thing and to get the job done in the 21st century.

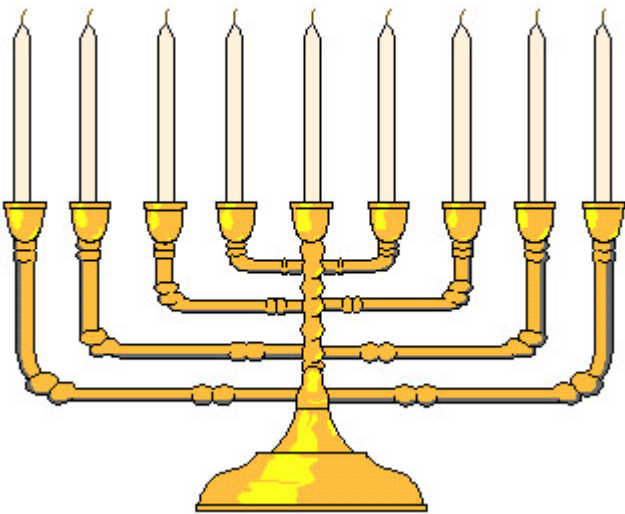
## Hanukkah represents religious freedom, remembrance, dedication

**Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Alan M. Kalinsky**  
61st Air Base Group Chaplain Services Division

It is a custom to give children and other loved ones presents on Hanukkah, and it seems that here in the United States we have made this the focal point of our holiday celebration but have forgotten the real meaning of Hanukkah.

Hanukkah commemorates the heroic struggle of the Jewish people against pagan forces at the time that Jews were religiously persecuted by the Syrians. The miracle of Hanukkah is that when the Hasmoneans were victorious they returned to rededicate the temple in Jerusalem which had been desecrated. The Hasmoneans found one cruse of oil which had the seal of the High Priest intact. Only oil which had this seal could be used to light the Menorah. The oil was supposed to last for one day but instead lasted for eight days. We commemorate this miracle by lighting a new candle each of the eight nights of Hanukkah.

What is the procedure for lighting the Menorah? We put candles in from right to left. Each night a



new candle is put into the Menorah. However, when we light the Menorah, we light the new candle first and continue from left to right. Our Menorahs should be placed near a window so that all can see the candles burning. We are commanded to publicize the miracle of Hanukkah, not to keep it only for ourselves. It is important for us to celebrate with others the great miracle that hap-

pened many years ago.

If we could sit back for a moment and think about what this holiday symbolizes, then our focus would change. Hanukkah represents religious freedom. It represents fighting against injustice and fighting against oppression. It teaches us that the few can prevail over the many. Hanukkah teaches us that we should be proud to be Jewish.

There is another aspect to Hanukkah as well. Hanukkah means dedication. It is a chance for us to rededicate ourselves to Judaism and to our synagogues. Now is the time to commit to attending services more frequently, enrolling in adult education class or adding another ritual to our observance. This renewed commitment allows us to live up to the true meaning of the holiday of Hanukkah.

May the lights of the Menorah illuminate our homes and our lives and inspire us to be more committed to those things that are dear to us.

This year the first candle will be lit Dec. 13. The annual celebration of Hanukkah at Los Angeles Air Force Base is Dec. 16 at 11:30 a.m. in Building D-8. Please call the chaplains' office at 363-1956 for more information.

## Astro News

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**Call 363-1221 for more  
information.**

# News Briefs

## Recent military justice actions

The following Los Angeles Air Force Base individual received non-judicial punishment under Article 15 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice in November.

**Senior Airman** — Reprimanded and reduced to airman first class under Article 134 for making and using a false identification.

## Promotions

**Enlisted Promotions for December**

**Joyce A. Sawyer** to senior master sergeant; **Roger L. Castleman** and **Ermelinda Perez** to technical sergeant; **Denise M. Heim** and **Kevin D. Johnson** to staff sergeant; **Derrick A. March** and **Tasha R. McNair** to senior airman; and **Kaniyika S. Freeman** and **Shannon M. Oaks** to airman first class.

**Officer promotions for December**

**William G. Gardner** to colonel; **Thomas J. Connare** to major; **Melvin D. Fernandez**, **Marc E. Herrera**, **Michael C. Naegle** and **Daniel W. Phillips** to first lieutenant.

## New produce bags

SAINT PETERSBURG, FLORIDA — Health conscious consumers can now keep a large variety and quantity of produce on hand at all times thanks to a new space-age development.

The new product, known as Evert-fresh bags, are green bags designed to extend to the freshness life of fruits and vegetables three to 10 times longer.

The bags are made of a high quality film made with the natural clay, Oja, that neutralizes ethylene gas. The film “breathes” and allows other harmful gases and moisture to escape.

Evert-fresh bags are available in the commissary in the produce section and with the regular storage bags. The bags come in three sizes: small (approx. .5 gallon), medium (approx. 1 gallon) and large (approx. 1.5 gallon). Packages contain 10 bags. The bags can be rinsed and reused. *(Courtesy of the commissary)*

## Correction

The Kodiak Island Launch photo that ran on the cover of the Nov. 20 issue of the Astro News was taken by Mike Bradford, TRW.

# Uniform changes spark questions

RANDOLPH AIR FORCE BASE, Texas (AFPN) — The Air Force Personnel Center is answering numerous questions about uniform items. These questions have come as part of an overwhelming response to a recent news release regarding changes to the uniform.

The responses indicate the existence of widespread rumors about some of these items.

“There are some rumors circulating about several uniform items that need to be corrected to stop any misinterpretation of the instructions,” said Staff Sgt. Randy Larson, noncommissioned officer in charge, Air Force Dress and Appearance in AFPC. “The rumors are about some relatively new items.”

The battle dress uniform stripes, white cardigan sweater, blue cardigan sweater, buttons on the mess dress jacket, green cloth jungle boots and rank on the gortex parka are the items of highest concern.

**BDU stripes** — The correct BDU stripes for women are the 3 1/2- or 4-inch chevrons, while the males are only authorized to wear the 4-inch chevron. This change was made Oct. 1, 1997, with the phase out of the old chevrons.

**White cardigan sweater** — The white cardigan sweater may be worn as part of the maternity uniform. It may be worn by pregnant members indoors; however, since it is not considered an outergarment, it must be worn under an outergarment when worn outdoors.

**Blue cardigan sweater** — When the blue cardigan sweater is worn outside, it must be buttoned.

**Mess dress jacket** — It is rumored that the buttons on the mess dress jacket must be changed from the Air Force shield to the Hap Arnold buttons. Larson said there is no requirement for this change, however, it is permissible for people to buy the transformation kit and transfer over to the new buttons.

**Green cloth jungle combat boots** — These boots are still authorized and are not planned for phase out.

**Gortex parka** — Larson said the Air Force has decided to go to a slide-on cloth rank insignia, to be slipped over the tab of the parka. A contract was



Photo by Airman 1st Class Chris McGiveney

**Airman 1st Class Denete D. Tracy, an information management apprentice for the Space and Missile Systems Center’s Systems Acquisition Directorate, polishes her boots in preparation for the next duty day. For more information on uniform wear, reference Air Force Instruction 36-2903, Personal Dress and Appearance of Air Force personnel.**

awarded in late October, and the contractor says the insignia will be available in supply channels in December or January. The stock numbers and wear criteria are still being worked out. Members should look to their major command supplement to AFI 36-2903, Dress and Personal Appearance of Air Force Personnel, to see if rank is authorized to be worn when it does become available at each base.

People with questions about the Air Force uniform may e-mail Larson at Randy.Larson@afpc.randolph.af.mil.

## BDU Day

Los Angeles Air Force Base members are reminded that although Thursday is mandatory BDU days, wearing BDUs during other days of the week is authorized when duty requirements warrant.

# Action Line 363-2255

The Action Line is your direct link to **Col. Dieter Barnes**, 61st Air Base Group commander.

The Action Line’s purpose is to make Los Angeles Air Force base a better place to work, live and play. Of course the fastest way to resolve any problem is to ask the person who can actually fix it.

Below is a list of people who can do just that:

(Base Exchange)	David Clore	640-0129
(Base IG)	Lt. Col. Stephen Marchitelli	363-0802
(Chaplain)	Lt. Col. Michael J. DiRenzo	363-1956
(Civil Engineering)	Maj. Angela Alexander	363-0287

(Commissary)	Al Cherry	363-6140
(Communications Sqd.)	Lt. Col. Mark Hall	363-0798
(Equal Employment Opportunity Program Office)		
	Leonard Gonzales	363-1565
(Fraud, Waste and Abuse Hotline)		363-2020
(Housing)	Tech. Sgt. Belinda Hines	363-8340
(Logistics)	1st Lt. George T. Unsinger	363-0351
(Medical)	Lt. Col. Mark P. Wisniewski	363-5005
(Mission Support)	Maj. Doug A. Stiegleiter	363-1230
(Security Forces)	Maj. Larry D. Bartlett	363-0032
(Services)	Gary L. Van Dusen	363-0430

(Social Actions)	Capt. Lisa D. Day	363-2806
TRICARE		363-0261
24-hour Crime Stop		363-2124

Try the system first. Work with your supervisor, first sergeant or commander — they are there to help. If you are not satisfied with the response or are unable to resolve a problem, call the Action Line. Your call will be recorded and if you leave your name and phone number, you will receive an answer.

Action lines of broad interest to the Los Angeles Air Force Base community will be published in the Astro News.



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cesses at the plant, the admiral said. The FDA and a DOD contractor test all vaccines produced by Bioport for sterility, stability, purity and potency.

Cowan compared the tests to the way the National Aeronautics and Space Administration checks and rechecks the space shuttle and launch vehicles.

“NASA is famous for having redundant procedures to make sure that, if anything goes wrong, there’s another procedure in place to catch it, and another procedure in place to catch that,” he said. “You can’t have a flat tire in space and pull over to fix it.

“The FDA is the same way. They have very tight controls and many checks to make sure nothing slips through the cracks. We’re very comfortable with them, and we think they’ve done their job to make sure no problems occur (with the anthrax vaccine). Bioport also has shown a very strong intent to do their job right.”

Cowan attributes some of the fear and paranoia over the anthrax program to irresponsible distribution of information, mostly over the Internet.

“There’s a lot of misinformation out there, and it’s the responsibility of each individual to not only get information about things that affect him, but test the quality of that information,” he said. He recommended service members and their families visit the DOD anthrax web site, currently located on the DOD home page at [www.defenselink.mil](http://www.defenselink.mil).

“We’re updating the anthrax web site, trying to target our audience and speak to them in terms that are easy to understand,” he said. “Folks who visit the (revamped) web site are going to find more information in

a format they’re comfortable with.”

Anthrax inoculations fall under the much broader category of force medical protection, which includes surveillance of areas where biological weapons may be a threat; early detection of chemical attacks; the use of antibiotics and other medicines to treat symptoms of biological contamination; and a host of other measures. Anthrax gets attention, Cowan said, because it is deadly and easily obtained, transported and added to explosives.

Cowan said the vaccine targets the essence, or heart, of anthrax, making it highly effective; however, Russian scientists recently reported they had genetically altered anthrax, making it resistant to their vaccine. Such a strain would provide a potent and fatal weapon if it falls into the hands of a rogue nation or transnational terrorists. Cowan said DOD is attempting to obtain the altered strain for testing against the Bioport vaccine.

“We are just as serious as we can be about protecting our forces from all ends,” Cowan said. And because anthrax is easily turned into a biological weapon, he said, the vaccine will continue to be mandatory for service members.

“It takes very little skill to obtain the wild anthrax culture and use it in some sort of weapon,” he said. “Anthrax is the poor man’s atomic bomb. By immunizing our force, we are immunizing ourselves against an ‘atomic’ bomb.”

The Los Angeles Air Force Base clinic currently provides the anthrax vaccine for people going to the gulf region who are at risk for this exposure, said Lt. Col. Keith Kulow, 61st Medical Squadron chief of professional services. “General immunizations for all people on base will begin sometime late in the next year.”

Heave ho....



Photo by Airman 1st Class Chris McGiveney

**Bob Jones, a 61st Air Base Group Logistics Division warehouse driver, loads a 55-gallon barrel for storing hazardous materials into a storage bin outside Building 240. Base Supply is the accumulation site for hazardous materials on base. For more details, call 363-0160.**

# JASSM nears production

**Chris McGee**  
Air Armament Center Public Affairs

EGLIN AIR FORCE BASE, FLA. — The Air Force is looking to develop more lethal and cost-effective weapon systems as it embraces the expeditionary concept and cultivates business reform measures.

The Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff Missile, or JASSM, program office in the Air Armament Center’s armament product directorate at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla., is supporting that aim.

The JASSM program, a joint effort between the Air Force and Navy with the Air Force as the lead service promises a long-range, air-launched cruise missile that will destroy high-value and heavily defended targets without putting aircrews at risk.

“The weapon’s primary role is against targets that require precision accuracy,” said Terry Little, program director for the JASSM’s joint program office. “Typically, these are heavily-defended targets: things like surface-to-air missile sites, command and control, air operations centers and targets critical to the enemy’s ability to fight.”

The JASSM program office is working to bring the missile into active inventory by 2002. The program will enter the engineering and manufacturing development phase in November.

“One of this program’s initiatives is an early focus on manufacturing,” Little said. “It’s an integral part of our design phase. That’s the way you have to do it if you want to be able to have a low-cost solution and way to address manufacturing costs until you are in production.”

Supporting the expeditionary approach, JASSM integrates technologies Air Force leaders say are critical to the aerospace forces of the 21st century.

These include stealth, precision, versatility and a long-range capability, which will enable pilots in combat to fire the missile from outside enemy air defenses.

The F-16 and B-52 will be the first two aircraft to serve as delivery platforms for the JASSM. The B-1 and B-2 will follow, with money and priority determining whether other aircraft will receive JASSM integration.

Program officials said the missile will promote cost-efficiency by providing combat aircraft the capacity to destroy more targets with fewer sorties. Bombers will be able to carry up to 24 missiles, each with a different target.

“The accuracy of the missile is such that, in general, you do not need multiple missions to kill a target,” said Little.

The missile’s capabilities may affect the political considerations of war planning, said Sharon Brooks, JASSM deputy program director. Specifically, the missile’s long-range dimension may mean the United States will have less need to negotiate basing and fly-over agreements with foreign countries.

“The JASSM gives us more flexibility,” Brooks said. “The commanders in chief need to have flexibility in their ability to prosecute a conflict. The more negotiated agreements are necessary for us to base or overfly, the more difficult it is to prosecute any conflict.”

The program is emerging as a model for acquisition reform. The program office’s objective is to keep the cost below \$400,000 per missile in 1995 dollars, with the threshold being \$700,000. Estimates are now at \$300,000 per missile, said Little.

The Air Force awarded a contract to Lockheed Martin in April. The contract authorized Lockheed Martin to complete the second part of the program definition and risk reduction phase and, when directed, to produce a minimum of 2,400 missiles.

## Have paper, will wrap...



Photo by Airman 1st Class Chris McGiveney

**Airman 1st Class Larina Whitehorse, a 61st Medical Squadron primary care technician, wraps Christmas gifts at the base exchange. Whitehorse and other Fort MacArthur dormitory residents are raising money to defray the cost of morale, welfare and recreational activities for the upcoming year. For more information on upcoming events, call Senior Airman Russ Jackson at 363-5255.**

*Honor Guard Elite*

**Capt. Daniel P. McCutchon**

Capt. McCutchon is the Space and Missile Systems Center Space-Based Infrared Satellite Program Office executive officer and one of two captains on the base Honor Guard. McCutchon has volunteered numerous times to present the flag to the next of kin at military funerals and led the Los Angeles Air Force Base Honor Guard at the first West Los Angeles Veterans Day Parade. He is from Kent, Wash., and has previous honor guard experience as a member of Holloman Air Force Base Honor Guard. McCutchon said, “TDYs to March Air Reserve Base to support military honors at funerals really bring it home as to what the honor guard is all about. The community details are fun, but the honor and respect for service men and women, the military and the United States are all summed up in that one ceremony. It’s very powerful.”



Photo by Staff Sgt. Bill Gomez

*Leading L.A.*

**Staff Sgt. Deborah Mendiola**

Staff Sgt. Mendiola is the Space and Missile Systems Center’s Developmental Planning, Information Engineering Branch chief of information management. She ensures timely response to XR Help Desk calls and problem resolutions with computer or administrative paperwork. Mendiola is an active member of Base Enlisted Association and Non-commissioned Officers’ Association. She recently facilitated the base wide Clothes from the Heart Drive, which collected more than 800 pounds of unwanted clothing items from base employees. The clothes were donated to Rainbow Services in San Pedro, Calif., a shelter for domestic abuse victims. Mendiola is currently completing college classes for her bachelor’s degree in criminal justice. Her future plans include becoming a first sergeant and completing a master’s degree in business administration. She is a native of San Antonio, Texas, and has been in the Air Force for 14 years.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Bill Gomez



# Animals breed happiness at Air Force hospital

Douglas J. Gillert  
American Forces Press Service

The staff at Wilford Hall Medical Center knew the cute but withdrawn 4-year-old girl had been sexually abused, but law enforcement authorities needed her to tell someone.

"I think she was too embarrassed to talk about it, so she kept quiet," Air Force Maj. Margaret Kohut said. "Then, I brought Max in. He crawled up on her lap, and she told him."

Remarkable things happen sometimes when Max, a silky-coated brown dachshund, and other dogs and cats come prowling the halls and wards of this massive Air Force hospital at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas. Once Max used his cold nose and warm fur to get a response from a comatose man.

But mostly the animals bring smiles to the faces of bedridden patients, especially little boys and girls who have been isolated here by their rebellious or broken bodies. One example was little, 3-year-old Alizabeth Watson, who was in for one of several operations she needed for a kidney problem. She was visited Nov. 19 by Max, Roscoe and a playful Pug named Sammy. They made her forget about her troubles for a while.

"Animals don't care what you look like, what your state of mind is or if you're disfigured," said Kohut, a clinical social worker who steers the pet therapy program here on a volunteer basis. "They give love

unconditionally."

Twice a week, on Wednesday and Thursday, Kohut and others take their pets to Wilford Hall, and for a few hours lighten the loads of patients and staff alike.

"At Christmas, we'll not only visit the hospital but also the basic trainees not able to go home for the holidays, the people staying at the Fisher House [a temporary home for families of patients], even the correctional custody inmates," Kohut said.

And on normal visiting days when she's completed her ward rounds, Kohut takes Max to the pharmacy, where people stoop to pet and talk with the good-natured dachshund, forgetting for a while how long they may have been waiting in line.

"Bringing the pets here reduces patients' stress, lowers their blood pressure," Kohut said. "For awhile, they can forget about their problems and pressures."

The Animal Assisted Therapy Program has been on the books since 1994, but nobody brought pets in until Kohut revitalized the program this summer. Since July, six dogs, one cat and a rabbit have been coming weekly to cheer patients. Next month, Kohut's husband will bring his cockatoo in. Nobody yet has volunteered a pet snake.

Before getting their "dog tags," the pets must be certified by a veterinarian as free of diseases and parasites. The animals must be well groomed, good-natured and undisturbed by elevators, crowded halls and the typical

## Future of medical care...



Courtesy photo

Los Angeles Air Force Base will be the first facility to incorporate the Air Force Surgeon General's "Clinic of the Future" concept when a new two-story, 48,000-square foot building is opened in fiscal year 2002. Ground breaking is scheduled to take place during the first quarter of fiscal 2000, and construction is expected to take appoximately 18 months. Plans for a drive through area to pick up pharmacy refills is one of the technological advancements scheduled to be implemented in the new building, enhancing the quality of life for Air Force personnel and their dependents.

clutter of a hospital bed. Max, Sammy and Roscoe fit the bill perfectly, seeking and submitting patiently to rubs, scratches, pats and strokes from hands big and small.

A couple times a month, volunteers meet for pet therapy training and obedience classes. They learn that the animals must remain close to people most of the time to stay well socialized. And they learn not to force their visits upon anyone, although few can resist the wagging tails and alert, upturned faces of the friendly pets.

Kohut said she's aware of a similar program at the hospital at Wright-

Patterson AFB, Ohio, where someone's actually assigned full-time to head pet therapy. And Tripler Army Medical Center in Hawaii reported a similar program last year. She doesn't know if other military hospitals use pets but said the practice is widespread in the civilian community.

She thinks all hospitals should try the program.

"Therapy animals provide an emotional connection without judgment, criticism, fear or distaste for the medical condition of the patient," she said. The patients' smiles attest to the program's worth.

# Astro ‘Turf’

## Don’t leave your teeth behind for future archeologists to find

**1st Lt. John Napier**  
Public Affairs Office

What has 200 legs and three teeth? The front row of a Willie Nelson concert.

In an effort to prevent more fodder for the joke, the Sports Advisory Council in cooperative effort with the dental clinic here recently ruled a mouthguard must be worn when playing intramural flag football.

Yes, the flag football season is over, however, the need for protection against mouth injuries doesn’t stop with the end of flag football. The need for safety in the remaining intramural sports is just as important throughout the year.

As much of an inconvenience as wearing a mouthguard may seem, the goal of preventing injuries to the mouth cannot be argued. There’s no question while playing flag football, the opportunity for one of your pearly whites to leave your body and become an archaeological find 2,000 years from now is very good.

The use of a mouthpiece doesn’t have to be limited to flag football though. In hopes to encourage the use of mouthguards in other intramural sports, I thought of

some ideas that may make wearing a mouthguard less inconvenient. In fact, some of these ideas may become an integral part of the psychological battle of a sporting event.

First, put words on the front of the mouthguard so your opponent can read them. You’re playing flag football, you’re facing a drooling, fire-breathing opponent across the line of scrimmage. The opponent is constantly insulting you and threatening you. What do you do? Well, all you do is smile and let that person see what you have written on your mouthguard. My suggestion would be “Your mama!” This would create such a diversion that you would be able to fly right by the opponent and make an incredible play.

Second, during volleyball matches, the same approach could be used. As refined as volleyball is compared to other sports, there are opportunities to trade barbs with the opponents without being called for unsportsmanlike conduct. I would suggest making more than one mouthguard with different sayings for use in different situations. For example, after you dig a hard-driven ball, put in a mouthguard that says, “Is that all you got?” Or, after you put away an impressive kill, use one that says “You can’t stop me!” Then when the match is over, put

in the one that says “Nice match.”

Another creative opportunity would be to cause a diversion during an intramural basketball game. Have you ever seen those great free throw distractions during a men’s collegiate basketball game? The best one I ever saw was when fans held up a poster of Farrah Fawcett in the stands behind the backboard. Since there are no stands behind the backboards on this base, why not put miniature posters on your mouthguard. Then, when an opponent steps up to the free-throw line, look at them and smile displaying the miniature poster of your choice. I recommend a mini poster of Gen. Michael Ryan saying “Aim High.” Hopefully, the person will heed that advice and miss the shot.

Although flag football is the only intramural sport that requires the use of mouthguards, protecting against mouth injuries should be a concern in all sports. In an effort to make the use less of an inconvenience, I suggest using the ideas presented in this article. This way, not only are you protecting your pearly whites, you are also employing a psychological tactic that could spur your team on to victory.

Who would have thought that Willie Nelson would contribute so much in preventing sports injuries?

## Building stronger families in today’s military

**Emma Terrell**  
Family Support Center

We are approaching a special time of the year — the holiday season. It’s a time referred to as “family” time or in our case — “military-family” time.

Military families are unique. They feature every possible structure and can be strong and functional. To help military families, the University of Nebraska offers the following ideas from their program, “Building Family Strengths.”

When we refer to family strengths, we are talking about

relationship patterns, interpersonal skills and competencies — all of which are activities that go into creating a home and must be helpful to every member of the family.

Some of these positive ideas create a sense of family identity, encourage the development of the family and individual members and aid the family’s ability to cope effectively and include:

**Commitment** - A promise of time and energy. It means that the



family as a whole is committed to seeing each member reach his or her potential. It does not mean that one suffers so that others can grow.

**Appreciation and affection** - Members of strong families show appreciation for each other.

**Positive communication** - Members of strong families have good communication skills and spend a good bit of time talking with one another.

**Coping ability** - Members of

strong families are able to view stress or crises as an opportunity to grow.

**Spiritual well being** - Whether attending a formal religious service or not, strong family members have a sense of a greater good or power in life; and that belief gives them strength and purpose.

**Time together** - Strong families spend time together.

This time of year is a perfect opportunity to build stronger families in our military community by making quality use of our time together.

For details, please contact the Family Support Center at 363-1121.



# Athletes turn out for Cold Turkey Trot

**Capt. Deborah K. Schueren**  
Health and Wellness Center  
**Carlen Capenos**  
Services Marketing Office

A five kilometer run promoting the “Great American Smoke Out” was held Nov. 19 in Area B.

The event, called the “Cold Turkey Trot,” was sponsored by the Los Angeles Air Force Base Health and Wellness Center and the Fitness Center.

The trot pitted runners against the clock as they had to predict their finishing time. Winners were those who came closest to their time in each category. In celebration of Thanksgiving, turkeys were awarded to the winners.

The runners who were closest to their actual time were:

Men’s over 35 - Ed Casey and Bruce Timmer

Men’s under 35 - Senior Airman Jose Mendez, 61st Medical Squadron, and Capt. Jesse Arnstein, Space and Missile Systems Center Staff Judge Advocate

Women over 35 - Staff Sgt. Gwen Robinson, 61st MDS, and Gabrielle Marcher

Women under 35 - Capt. Kristine



Photo by Staff Sgt. Bill Gomez

From left to right, base runners **Capt. Jesse Arnstein, Staff Sgt. Alonzo Jones, Col. Dieter Barnes and Capt. Kristine Braswell** start off the base Cold Turkey Trot Nov. 19 near the base fitness center Nov. 19.

Braswell, 61st Air Base Group Services, and Airman 1st Class Kymm Espeland, 61st MDS

Col. Dieter Barnes, 61st Air Base Group commander, was the O-6 and above winner. He issued the following

challenge to all the senior leadership and members of Los Angeles Air Force Base, “We have a responsibility to our people to lead by example. As a member of the armed forces it is our duty to stay healthy, remain

physically fit and be ready to deploy at a moment’s notice. I look forward to running the 5K next year and challenge the men and women of Los Angeles Air Force Base to participate in this worthy event.”

The Nov. 19 date was chosen to coincide with The American Red Cross’ Great American Smoke Out. To celebrate, the HAWC sponsored booths at the base exchange and the commissary, encouraging smokers to quit for one day and potentially for the rest of their lives.

Currently the HAWC offers smoking cessation classes to all military identification card holders as well as civilian employees. The next class is an eight-hour program offered for active-duty members Dec. 15. The class is held at the HAWC.

A five-day class, available to family members and civilians is Jan. 5 from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. For more information about smoking cessation classes or other programs offered by the HAWC, call 363-6266.

To promote physical fitness, the fitness center offers a personal trainer daily to assist patrons individually on all aspects of getting into shape. Call for an appointment with Staff Sgt. Keith Vernon at 363-6815.

# Why tobacco is habit-forming

If you or anyone close to you smokes cigarettes, you are probably well aware that smoking is a habit, one that takes some effort to break.

This habit forms as inhalation of the chemical components of cigarettes are injected into your lungs, your bloodstream and then your brain. Learning some of the facts about tobacco may encourage you to break the habit in order to lead a healthier life.

## Nicotine is habit forming

Nicotine, one of the main chemical components of tobacco, is a habit forming drug that draws the smoker into both a physical and a psychological partnership with cigarettes. Once a smoker has learned the mechanics of smoking— and it definitely is an acquired technique — the smoker may begin to rely on cigarettes for what he or she believes to be stimulation, relaxation or stress relief. The body becomes chemically addicted to nicotine and the more one smokes, the more difficult it is to quit.

## More chemicals

The average cigarette generally contains about 8.4 milligrams of nicotine and 15 milligrams of tar. Tobacco smoke also contains arsenic, cyanide, carbon monoxide and formaldehyde. These are just a few of the 4,000 chemicals found in cigarette smoke, of which 43 are carcinogenic, or cancer causing.

## Sources of nicotine

Cigarettes are considered the most harmful form



of tobacco because cigarette smokers usually inhale deeply. But pipes and cigars hold risks of nicotine addiction as well. Chewing tobacco and snuff is also addictive and can also cause cancer, gum disease and erosion of the teeth.

## Physical effects

When inhaled, nicotine stimulates the central nervous system. All of the chemicals in a cigarette move to the brain through the bloodstream in eight seconds, causing a sharp rise in blood pressure and heart rate, constriction of the blood vessels and reducing sensitivity to pain and stress. Chronic

smokers often have impaired senses of taste and smell, less physical stamina and a poorer execution of motor tasks. Smoking is among the major causes of heart disease and lung cancer and is the primary cause of chronic bronchitis and emphysema. A smoker's skin ages and wrinkles prematurely, and female smokers have a higher incidence of unsuccessful pregnancies, stillbirths and lower weight babies.

## Companion habits

As you become more physically addicted to tobacco, you will develop other habits that reinforce the role of cigarettes in your daily routine. You may not even realize this is happening. A cup of coffee may trigger a move toward a cigarette. You may light up before you get into a phone conversation or before starting our car. These become similar to conditioned reflexes and show that the physical and the psychological go hand in hand in promoting and furthering addiction.

## Thinking of quitting?

If you are considering giving up the health hazards of tobacco use and would like additional information, please call the Health and Wellness Center at 363-6266.

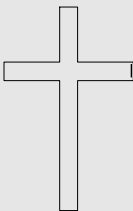
*(Article courtesy of Parlay International 1995 and the Los Angeles Air Force Base Health and Wellness Center.)*



# Chapel Schedule

**Roman Catholic**  
Saturday: Sacrament of Reconciliation at 3:45 p.m., Mass at 4:30 p.m.  
Sunday: Mass at 9 a.m., CCD in Building 37 at 10:30 a.m.

**Protestant**  
Sunday: Sunday School at 9 a.m., Building 37; General Protestant worship at 10:30 a.m.



All the above services are at the Fort MacArthur Chapel unless otherwise noted. Call the Chaplain Service division office at 363-1956 for more information.

**A New Year's Eve Bash is Dec. 31 from 8 p.m. to 1 a.m. at the Community Center.** The bash is free and open to all military identification card holders, 18 years and older. There will also be champagne at midnight and live entertainment throughout the evening.

**The Fort MacArthur Community Center has information packets for the annual Air Force photography contest, which ends Jan. 31, 1999.** The contest is open to active-duty military and their family members. Call the community center at 363-8225 for more information on the rules, categories and requirements for submissions.



**The Congressional Awards program is a noncompetitive program open to all 14- to 23-year olds in the United States** regardless of prior achievements, life circumstances, physical or mental abilities. The Congressional Award recognizes young people for achieving individual goals in four program areas: voluntary public services, personal development, physical fitness and expedition and exploration. Bronze, silver and gold medals are presented by United States Senators and members of Congress during local, state and national ceremonies. For more information on the program or if you are 24 or older and would like to be an advisor, please call Shenethia Carter at 363-8225.

**Due to the new government travel card contract, effective Nov. 30, services facilities will no longer accept American Express credit cards.** This includes government and personal American Express cards. For more information, call Capt. Kristine Braswell at 363-0430.

## The Club 363-2230

**The Club will host a Member's Appreciation Breakfast Thursday from 6 to 8 a.m.** The menu consists of scrambled eggs, home fries, bacon, sausage or ham, oatmeal or grits and toast. This breakfast is free to all members.

**Club members can win free turkeys or hams during December.** Put your name and phone number on the back of all club receipts this month and drop it in the "Turkey Box."

**The Barber Shop in Area A is located in Build-**

**ing 120.** It is open Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Club cards are accepted for payment. For more information call 363-1733.

## Vet Clinic 363-8269

**The veterinarian is scheduled to be at the Fort MacArthur Vet Clinic today and Dec. 18 and Jan. 8 from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.** Call 363-8269 to schedule an appointment. Please leave a message on days the clinic is closed. State your name, phone number, animal name and species as well as what kind of appointment is needed. The clinic will call you back with an appointment date and time.

## Youth Services 363-8383

**Parents Night Out will be held at the youth center tonight from 7 to 10 p.m.** The menu includes a make-your-own-pizza. There will also be a ginger bread house making activity, games and a movie. This event is open to children, 5 to 12. Cost is \$6 for members and \$9 for nonmembers.

**Kids Connection Volleyball Night will be held at the teen center, Building 451, Monday from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.** This event is free for youth center members and \$3 for nonmembers. Volleyball night is for kids, 5 to 12. Parents are welcome and encouraged to participate.

**The youth center will make cards and cookies Wednesday from 6 to 7:30 p.m.** This is a members-only event and costs \$2 per person and is open to children, 5 to 12.

**The Chatter Box and Holiday Craft Night is Wednesday from 6 to 9 p.m.** at the teen center. Share your thoughts with other teens and the center's staff. Stay for the gift-making session that follows the discussion. The event is free for members and \$3 for nonmembers.

**A trip to the "Parade of Christmas Lights" is Dec. 18,** and a bus will leave the youth center at 6 p.m. and return at approximately 10 p.m. The cost is \$2 for members and \$5 for nonmembers. There will be a stop at McDonalds after the parade.

**A Winter Camp for kids is Dec. 21 to Jan. 8 from 6:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.** and is open to elementary school children, 4 to 12. Breakfast, lunch and an afternoon snack are provided. The cost is based on family income. Call the youth center for rates.

**A TV taping of "Malibu CA" is Dec. 23 for kids, 12 to 18.** Sign up deadline is Dec. 21. The trip will accept 30 people. The bus leaves the youth center at 1:15 p.m. and will return at approximately 6:30 p.m. The event is free to members and \$3 for nonmembers.

## Child Development Center 363-8335

**The El Segundo Child Development Center sponsors a book fair next week from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.** Parents will be able to select and purchase books for their children. The CDC staff will be available to assist parents in choosing books that are age appropriate.

**The El Segundo Child Development Center hosts a pajama literacy party to encourage a love for reading Friday from 9:30 a.m. to 12 p.m.** Parents are invited to come and read to the children. Puppet shows will be held in the classrooms as well.

**The Fort MacArthur Parent Advisory Board meets at the Fort MacArthur Child Development Center Dec. 15 at 5 p.m.** The PAB meets the third Tuesday of each month. All parents of children enrolled at the Fort MacArthur CDC are invited to attend.

**If you enjoy children and are interested in working at home, you might consider doing family child care.** The Air Force provides you with free child development training. If you would like more information, call 363-8334.

**A Holiday Around the World party is Dec. 18 at the El Segundo Child Development Center from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.** Each classroom will represent a country. Parents are invited to bring in cultural dishes and children are encouraged to dress to represent their own heritage.

## The Community Center 363-8225

**A new area is available for private parties beginning Monday** at the new community center annex, located next to the Fort MacArthur Fitness Center in Building 425. The space will open in the spring for daily use, but is opening early for private functions for the holiday season. Call the community center for reservations.

**The community center takes a tour to the San Diego Outlet mall Saturday.** The tour leaves at 8 a.m. and returns at approximately 5 p.m. The cost is \$5 per person and is open to any identification card holder. The sign-up deadline is today. A tram will also be leaving from the mall to go shopping in Tijuana, Mexico.

**The community center has a Game Night Dec. 8 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.** in the Harbor View Lounge. This event is free and open to all identification cardholders, 18 or older, and their guest. Several board games and cards will be available, or bring your own.

**Come to a craft instructional class at the community center Wednesday from 6 to 8 p.m.** and make holiday wreaths. The cost to participate is \$15, which includes all supplies. This event is open to all identification cardholders and their guests.

**The community center is interested in knowing what TV show tapings people would like to go to.** Upcoming tours include the Jeopardy Game Show Dec. 16 and Moesha Jan. 7. Call the community center to suggest other tapings.

**The community center's library is open Tuesday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and Wednesday from 3 to 7 p.m.** The volunteer library is also looking for help.

**The picnic area at the base pool can still be reserved.** The cost is \$5 per cabana. A refundable cleaning deposit of \$25 is required. Call the community center to make reservations.



Services hours for upcoming holiday season...

ACTIVITY	<i><u>Dec. 21 and 28</u></i>	<i><u>Dec. 22, 23 and 30</u></i>	<i><u>Dec. 24 and 31</u></i>	<i><u>Dec. 25 and Jan. 1</u></i>	<i><u>Dec. 26 and Jan. 2</u></i>	<i><u>Dec. 27 and Jan. 3</u></i>
Auto Skills	closed	1 p.m. to 8 p.m.	closed	closed	closed	closed
Child Development Center	6:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.	6:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.	6:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.	closed	closed	closed
Community Center	8 a.m. to 9 p.m.	8 a.m. to 9 p.m.	8 a.m. to noon	closed	closed	closed
Equipment Rentals	9 a.m. to 3 p.m.	9 a.m. to 3 p.m.	9 a.m. to noon	closed	closed	closed
El Segundo Fitness Center	5 a.m. to 6 p.m.	5 a.m. to 6 p.m.	5 a.m. to noon	closed	closed	closed
Fort MacArthur Fitness Center	5 a.m. to 6 p.m.	5 a.m. to 6 p.m.	5 a.m. to noon	closed	9 a.m. to 3 p.m.	9 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Junior Teen Center	closed	3 p.m. to 9 p.m.	3 p.m. to 9 p.m.	closed	3 p.m. to 10 p.m.	closed
Lodging	6 a.m. to 10 p.m.	6 a.m. to 10 p.m.	6 a.m. to 10 p.m.	6 a.m. to 10 p.m.	6 a.m. to 9 p.m.	6 a.m. to 9 p.m.
Senior Teen Center	closed	3 p.m. to 10 p.m.	3 p.m. to 10 p.m.	closed	3 p.m. to 11 p.m.	closed
The Club	6 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.	6 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.	6 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.	closed	closed	closed
Youth Center	6:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.	6:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.	6:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.	closed	closed	closed

Equipment Rental  
363-2190

**The December Tickets and Information and Equipment Rental combination special is:** Buy a ski lift tickets for Mountain High and Bear Mountain and receive the skis, boots and poles for \$8.

New ski ticket sales are offered: Mountain High Ski Resort is \$27, Bear Mountain Ski Resort is \$26,

Northstar at Tahoe or Sierra at Tahoe is \$39 for adults and \$33 for youths and Mammoth Mountain is \$43. Tickets should arrive in early December, so call for availability.

**The base operates a family campground** with 14 hardstand units with hookups for water and electricity. It is open year round and reservations are accepted. The camp is located two miles south of the base

between Marine and Rosecrans avenues on Aviation Boulevard. The cost is \$8 per day. Call the Equipment Rental office to make reservations.

Auto Skills Center  
363-1705

**The base’s auto skills center offers a winter preventive maintenance special.** The special includes lube oil and filter change,

checks on fluid levels, tires, belts, hoses and antifreeze. The cost is \$18 and is available for most cars. Call 363-1705 for an appointment.

**The Area B car wash is open.** The price is \$1.50 for a wash and 25 cents for a vacuum. One of the two stalls is convenient for recreational vehicle washing. The car wash is located at Building 214, in front of the auto skills center.

Base Briefs

**The Los Angeles Air Force Bases Officers’ Spouses’ Club is accepting applications for the 1999 Scholarship Awards.** Eligible applicants include dependents of an active-duty military member, a military retiree, a Department of Defense or Space and Missile Systems Center civilian who will graduate from high school in 1999 with a 3.0 grade point average or better. The application deadline is March 1, 1999.

**The legal assistance hours have been changed to include afternoon hours.**

Appointments are scheduled for half-hour blocks between 7:45 and 10:15 a.m. Tuesday and Thursday, and between 1 and 3:30 p.m. Monday and Thursday.

To make an appointment call 363-0916 or 1272.

Walk-in legal assistance is still provided for those who arrive Wednesday between 7:45 and 8:45 a.m. Notary and power of attorney service will continue to be provided every day from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Legal assistance is still provided for personal or civil legal problems to all active-duty members, their dependents, retirees and their dependents, to reservists and National Guard members on federal active duty, to the next-of-kin of members killed on active duty and to Reserve Officer Training Corps cadets who must meet dependent care responsibilities.

**The base’s Legal Office is recruiting volunteers**

**for the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program for the upcoming tax season.** The program is designed to help all active-duty military personnel, their dependents and retirees, to prepare income tax returns. Volunteers will serve as unit tax advisors and will answer questions, help others complete federal and state tax returns, provide forms and electronically transmit returns.

Volunteers may be military members or civil service employees. Training on federal tax returns is Jan. 11 to 15 and for California returns Jan. 20 to 22. Volunteers will be willing to help members of their unit with their tax returns and walk-in tax clients at the legal office. Call Capt. Robert Kearney at 363-6460 if you would like to volunteer.



### The Los Angeles Air Force Base Optometry Clinic is now open.

Dr. Clinton Anderson is the new optometrist. The clinic now has appointments for all active duty personnel and space available appointments for TRICARE Prime members.

Hours of operation at the clinic are Monday through Friday from 7 to 11:45 a.m. and 12:45 to 4 p.m., except the holidays.

To schedule an appointment call Senior Airman Terri Honeycutt at 363-2485.

### The Air Force Office of Special Investigations is recruiting qualified individuals to become special agents.

The AFOSI conducts criminal, fraud and counterintelligence investigations on behalf of the Air Force.

In the recently announced fiscal 1999 NCO Retraining Program Phase II (voluntary), many people are eligible to apply for the AFOSI. Those eligible are officers, senior airmen and senior airmen selects with less than six years military service; and staff sergeants, technical sergeants and master sergeants with less than 12 years of service. For more information, call Special Agents Rick Bergeron or Gene Ronningen at 363-3929 or 363-5169.

### The Government, Business,



### Education and Technology Expo 1998, an information technology conference and trade show, is Dec. 8 to 11

at the Los Angeles Convention Center's West Hall.

The event is free and will feature state-of-the-art displays, hands-on pavilions and more than 450 booths from technology companies. Seminars and workshops about technical and management topics will be provided on subjects including: technology trends, elementary to university level education, Internet and electronic commerce, disaster preparedness, government management, year 2000 challenges and more.

For more information, visit the GBET '98 website at [www.gbet.com](http://www.gbet.com).

**A holiday dinner for the base's single unaccompanied personnel is Wednesday at 5:30 p.m.** in Building 37 at Fort MacArthur. The menu includes turkey, ham, desserts and all the trimmings. For more information, call 363-1956.

**Col. Barnes will host the annual 61st Air Base Group Holiday Party at The Club ballroom Friday from 2 to 4 p.m.** All 61st ABG personnel, military and civilian are invited to attend with the understanding that minimal manning will still be available

for services. The party is authorized as an alternate duty location for both military and civilian personnel. Personnel not in attendance will be at work or on leave. Attire will be the uniform of the day or civilian clothes. See your squadron point of contact for tickets or call Capt. Ron Tate at 363-5049 or Capt. Dawn Coley at 363-5014 for details.

**The following is a listing of courses offered through the base Health and Wellness Center.** All classes are held at the HAWC unless otherwise specified. All classes will be taught by a registered dietitian except for the smoking cessation class, which will be taught by a trained facilitator.

**A two-part weight management course will be held Monday from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.** Part two will be offered Dec. 14 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. The class will cover 10 keys to successful weight loss and maintenance.

**The Basics of Eating Healthy for the Heart Healthy** course will be offered Wednesday from 6 to 10 p.m. Topics will include basic concepts of blood cholesterol, heart healthy eating and low fat cooking. The course is based on the American Heart Association's recommendations for heart health. This is an excellent course for anyone interested in heart health and especially those who have been diagnosed with high

cholesterol levels.

**A Nutrition as Preventative Medicine course will be offered Thursday from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.** The class will cover foods and dietary supplements that may help prevent chronic diseases. Some of the latest information on phytochemicals, herbs, vitamins and minerals will be reviewed.

**A Smoking Cessation course will be offered for active-duty personnel Dec. 15 from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.** The class incorporates cognitive and behavior change strategies, the "cold turkey" approach or the use of nicotine replacement therapy when appropriate. Using the "Stages of Change" model; smoking cessation participants are evaluated on their readiness to change.

For more information call the HAWC at 363-6266 or ask your medical provider for a referral.

**The housing referral office wants to conduct a seminar featuring apartment rentals, veterans' affairs information and home buying.**

If you are interested in attending this seminar, call Georgia Hutton at 363-8397.



# Food safety tips for the holiday season

The busy holiday season is about to start, friends and family gather for the traditional holiday dinner. Days of meal planning and preparation are the norm. Keeping the food safe from harmful bacteria should be tops on your list. By following a few simple steps you can spend that special time with friends and family and not the good folks at the emergency room. First plan ahead, consider all the things you want to prepare.

### Thawing foods properly is a important aspect of preparing a meal:

Never thaw foods on the counter top. Thawing at room temperature allows the outer part of the meat to thaw, while the inside remains frozen, giving bacteria time to grow. Thaw raw meat in the refrigerator on the bottom shelf below uncooked or precooked foods this will prevent cross contamination (the spreading of germs from uncooked items to prepared items). Remember a frozen 20-pound turkey may take two to four days to thaw so again, plan ahead.

### Keep the hot food hot and the cold food cold:

The refrigerator must be at or below 40 degrees this will keep bacteria at bay. Put a thermometer where it can easily be seen, and check the temperature occasionally to ensure the refrigerator is working properly. Hot foods must have a holding temperature of 140 degrees.

### When preparing a meal the only good

### bacteria is dead bacteria:

Prepare any uncooked foods, such as salad, in a separate area of the kitchen. If space is a problem, prepare and serve the uncooked foods first. Raw meats can contain Salmonella, Escherichia coli and other bacteria. Proper cooking temperatures can kill bacteria. However, the uncooked food still has the chance of becoming contaminated. Clean all surfaces with a chlorine sanitizing solution or an antibacterial cleaner. Wash your hands and utensils after preparing any raw meats.

### Turkey talk:

The U.S. Department of Agriculture recommends cooking stuffing separately, but if you have to stuff the bird first make sure you check the temperature with a meat thermometer. Even if the turkey has reached the recommended temperature of 180 degrees, the stuffing may have not reached 165 degrees, the temperature needed to kill any food-borne bacteria. Pre-stuffed frozen turkeys should be safe according to the USDA, but manufacturer's handling instructions should be followed carefully. It can take up to six hours to properly cook a 20-pound turkey so expect to get up early. Avoid the temptation to roast the turkey all night at a low temperature, cooking below 325 degrees is unsafe. Low temperature cooking allows meat to remain too long at temperatures in which bacteria can grow.

### Wow turkey sandwiches for lunch.....again:

Well now that you have prepared and served

your well-cooked meal, it is time to deal with the leftovers. Carve all the meat from the turkey before putting the leftovers in the refrigerator for no more than three or four days. Cooked turkey will keep in the freezer up to four months when wrapped in heavy foil or placed in a freezer bag. Be sure to label it with the date it is placed in the freezer. Hot foods that have cooled enough so you can pick them up with your bare hands can be placed in covered containers and stored in the coldest part of the refrigerator. Allow space around the food for adequate air circulation. Ham and stuffings with meat should be separated into smaller portions to allow proper cooling.

### Now for a late night snack:

Some microwaves rotate the foods as it cooks. For those microwaves that do not, food may have cold spots so heat it for a few minutes and rotate. Be sure that the leftovers are heated to at least 165 degrees.

### Help is only a phone call away:

If you have any food safety questions during this holiday season, the USDA has a hot line that is open year round and is staffed with economists, dietitians and food technologists. Just give them a call at (800) 535-4555 between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. EST or call the 61st Medical Squadron's Public Health Office at 363-5032. Don't let something as simple as a food borne illness prevention put a damper on your holiday; remember to cook it safe; serve it safe; and have a happy holiday season. (Courtesy of 61st